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PROPOSED MEDIUM-TERM PLAN FOR THE PERIOD 1998-2001

Programme 16. Economic development in Europe

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16.1 The overall orientation of the programme, which is under the responsibility of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), is to strengthen the economic relations of the European countries, among themselves and with other countries of the world. In this context, ECE must now exercise its advocacy role to maintain free trade, investment flows, cooperation, exchange of experience and the free flow of information and technology between the countries of the ECE region and the rest of the world. Furtherance of the integration efforts of countries in transition into the European and global economies will be a priority. More diversified forms and methods of assistance to these countries must be developed in response to their growing demand for policy analysis and guidelines, as well as help in adhering to region-wide standards, the capacity to adopt legally binding instruments and ways to develop their products to obtain access to and capture larger shares in western markets. Further, ECE will continue to make the results of its work in norms, standards and guidelines available to the countries of other regions. In so doing, it will make full use of its cooperative undertakings with the other regional commissions and the global programmes of the Organization.

16.2 In view of the long-standing cooperation between ECE and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the programme will also give renewed attention to cooperation with neighbouring countries in the Mediterranean region, where economic and social development will be essential to underpin the peace process in the Middle East and future cooperation between European and north African States in that area. Renewed attention will also be given to the reconstruction of war-torn areas.

16.3 The mandate for the programme stems from Economic and Social Council resolution 36 (IV) 1947, whereby the Council established ECE and assigned to it responsibilities for coordination and promotion of international economic cooperation in Europe. The mandate of the programme was further elaborated in a number of General Assembly and Economic and Social Council resolutions, as well as ECE resolutions and decisions.

16.4 By the end of the period covered by the medium-term plan, it is expected that ECE will have accomplished the following:

(a) Facilitated the participation of government officials, public and private entrepreneurs, non-governmental bodies and the academic community in the economic debate and the decision-making process through the provision of studies and policy analysis, as well as through its operational activities;

(b) Enhanced economic integration of the region and linkages with neighbouring countries or regions through the elaboration and dissemination of international conventions, agreements, norms and standards;

(c) Improved coordination with the secretariats of United Nations entities and non-United Nations regional bodies active in the region, such as the European Commission, OSCE, the Council of Europe, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Central European Initiative, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and the Council of Baltic Ministers. The new mechanism for coordination arrangements at the

regional level in the context of ACC will serve to facilitate such cooperation. It will also involve regional entities and the private sector more closely in its work.

16.5 ECE is conscious of the need to achieve these goals with a high level of cost-effectiveness, comparable to that of other institutions active in the region. The secretariat, backed up by inputs from governmental experts, provides long-standing experience and expertise about the countries of the region, East and West. ECE remains the only pan-European neutral forum with the essential transatlantic link for the exchange of views on economic issues among Governments where all participate as full members and on an equal footing.

Subprogramme 16.1 Environment

16.6 The objectives of the subprogramme, which is implemented by the Environment and Human Settlements Division, are:

(a) To provide policy direction for the ECE region. ECE will continue to adapt the Environmental Programme for Europe to the priority needs of countries, in particular those with economies in transition;

(b) To further the "Environment for Europe" process, including the preparation and follow-up to ministerial meetings within the region to review environmental priorities, adopt a strategic environmental policy and strive for coordination of national, subregional, regional and global environmental objectives. In that context, the subprogramme will also promote the implementation of Agenda 21 at the regional level and contribute, as appropriate, to the reviews undertaken by the Commission on Sustainable Development;

(c) To promote policy instruments for strengthening the capability of member countries to prevent and reverse environmental degradation by fully integrating environmental considerations into sectoral policies;

(d) To develop international environmental law (conventions and related protocols) and promote the effective monitoring and improved implementation of and compliance with international legal instruments in the field of the environment;

(e) To strengthen the capacity of member countries, especially countries in transition, to implement the regional environmental conventions and related protocols with a view to preventing, controlling and reducing adverse transboundary effects; to prevent and resolve related conflicts; to build institutional capacity and competence; to promote access to environmental information; to encourage public participation in environmental decision-making; to exchange technology and expertise; and to mobilize increased resources;

(f) To assist countries that are not members of OECD to examine their performance systematically and analytically in meeting domestic environmental policy objectives and relevant international commitments. This will be achieved by further developing, in cooperation with OECD, the environmental performance review programme;

(g) To assist countries in transition, in their reform processes, to build and strengthen their capacities for environmental protection and sustainable development, and to assist them in their efforts to be integrated into a pan-European legal and economic space, in particular through regional advisory services;

(h) To facilitate the coordination of environment-related programmes in the region and cooperate closely with other United Nations bodies, relevant international organizations and institutions active in the region, as well as the relevant subregional governmental and non-governmental organizations and private sector organizations, inter alia, to extend their achievements and agreed practices to the region as a whole.

Subprogramme 16.2 Transport

16.7 The proper functioning of economic activities, the production and distribution of goods, and trade are heavily dependent upon the development of transport, including international transport. There is a need for coordinated action designed to achieve an efficient, coherent transport system in the region, based on principles of market economy while pursuing the objectives of safety, environmental protection and energy conservation. The first objective of this subprogramme, which is implemented by the Transport Division, is to provide Governments with an efficient forum for cooperation, analysis and coordinated action in the field of transport. Priority areas of cooperation will continue to be the transport of dangerous goods, the construction of vehicles, road safety, transport infrastructure and combined transport. In addition, the area of customs questions affecting transport has been identified as a new priority.

16.8 Acting together under the auspices of ECE, member Governments have developed over the years a set of major international legal instruments in the field of transport that establish appropriate international regulations, norms and standards, facilitate border crossing and provide for the development of coherent international infrastructure networks for road, rail, inland waterways and combined transport. The importance of such legal instruments has consistently been recognized by Governments and industry, as well as by the second Pan-European Ministerial Transport Conference (Crete, March 1994). The second objective is to sustain and promote those international legal instruments and related regulations by continuing to make proposals for their updating and improvement, by increasing the number of contracting parties and, whenever possible, by monitoring implementation.

16.9 The major development trends in the field of transport in the region are the continuous growth of transport demand and accelerated development of road transport as compared to other modes of inland transport. A challenge for this subprogramme will be to continue to ensure efficient mobility of persons and goods while providing an adequate level of protection of the environment. To that end, the third objective is to ensure the implementation of the activities decided on by the 1996 Regional Conference on Transport and the Environment, as well as to assist in formulating further responses to that challenge.

16.10 Transport is also vital to the economic integration of countries and regions. The fourth objective is to improve the capabilities of the Governments of countries in transition to implement the international legal instruments developed by ECE, as well as other policies and measures aimed at the development of their transport systems and infrastructures, which are compatible with those of neighbouring parts of the ECE region. This will be accomplished, inter alia, through the promotion of subregional cooperation in the field of transport, the implementation of a programme of workshops and the provision of advisory services.

Subprogramme 16.3 Statistics

16.11 The objectives of this subprogramme, which is implemented by the Statistics Division, are:

(a) To improve national statistics;

(b) To promote coordination and uniformity of concepts;

(c) To respond to the emerging needs of countries in transition;

(d) To create the capacity in countries in transition to use the System of National Accounts effectively and to provide social indicators for their policy needs;

(e) To provide an efficient and up-to-date data service in the provision of macroeconomic statistics, in respect of countries in transition. Any data collection must be closely coordinated with other international organizations, including OECD and IMF, in order to avoid duplication;

(f) To ensure that ECE makes full use of appropriate information technology so as to provide the ECE secretariat with an information systems service and graphics design service aimed at achieving maximum efficiency.

Subprogramme 16.4 Trade facilitation

16.12 Information accompanying goods in international trade or that related to their payment must be transferred between a number of parties, traditionally on several different paper documents. Cumbersome formalities and procedures constitute a major impediment to trade, but can be eliminated or greatly reduced by developing best business practices and harmonizing standards. The subprogramme, which is implemented by the Trade Division, is designed to simplify, rationalize and, where possible, standardize procedures, formalities and requirements where these place financial and economic burdens on the free flow of goods and transport.

16.13 The objectives of this subprogramme are:

(a) To provide the standards necessary to ensure worldwide harmonization in electronic trade information interchange. To that end, the United Nations Electronic Data Interchange for Administration, Commerce and Transport (EDIFACT) will be developed and maintained within the framework of the ECE Working Party

on Facilitation of International Trade Procedures. This will be done in the context of a network of national, regional and international institutions engaged in the development and promotion of these standard activities;

(b) To enhance the dissemination of information on trade facilitation, in particular through electronic media. In this context, use of the trade facilitation database, ITUDOC, sponsored by ITU and the World Wide Web will be further developed;

(c) To strengthen cooperation and information exchanges with other regional commissions, UNCTAD, and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations working in the context of trade facilitation in order to avoid duplication of efforts and to create synergy in common projects.

Subprogramme 16.5 Economic analysis

16.14 Economic analysis is regarded by member Governments as an instrument for strengthening multilateral economic cooperation not only among ECE member countries but also between them and the rest of the world. One purpose of analysis and research is to increase rationality in the design of national and international policies of member countries. Another purpose is to increase awareness of the interdependence of member countries' economies and to encourage national policy makers to consider their own actions in an international perspective.

16.15 Although several eastern European countries are making significant progress in transforming their economic systems, the problems of transition to a market economy are expected to remain throughout the period covered by the plan. Thus, the current emphasis of this subprogramme on developments in the economies in transition will continue to receive priority.

16.16 More specifically, the objectives of this subprogramme, which is implemented by the Division for Economic Analysis and Projections, are:

(a) To extend the coverage of the analysis in the Economic Bulletin for Europe and the Economic Survey of Europe to the newly independent States of eastern Europe and the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, broaden the analysis of transition issues and encourage a greater number of member States to participate actively in the work of the Senior Economic Advisers to ECE Governments;

(b) To identify and promote opportunities for cooperation that contribute most effectively to sustained economic development of member countries. This will be done in close cooperation with other principal subsidiary bodies of ECE;

(c) To keep policy makers at the national and regional levels informed of demographic developments and their various determinants and consequences and to enable countries in transition to participate in regional population projects. As recommended by the International Conference on Population and Development, held at Cairo in 1994, the regular analysis of population trends and policies in the region, in particular those of countries in transition, will focus on reproductive and family behaviour, population ageing and international

migration. It will also focus on unprecedented trends, such as those of childbearing, marriage and mortality in the countries in transition since the end of the 1980s;

(d) To facilitate the monitoring of population-related indicators and policies at the regional level and the coordination of the national-level implementation of and follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Recommendations for Action adopted by the European Population Conference, held in 1993. In this context, assistance will be provided to countries in transition, inter alia, in connection with the relevant national capacity-building.

Subprogramme 16.6 Energy

16.17 In economies in transition, energy usage is very high; energy production and use efficiencies are low; energy prices tend to be below international levels; markets are fragmented; energy trade is hampered by poor infrastructure and the rupture of traditional transport interconnections; and energy policies, legislation and standards are below Western norms and practices. It is only by resolving these problems that the energy systems and economies of countries in transition will be able to be fully integrated into the European and world economies. In Mediterranean countries, energy systems are poorly interconnected and integrated at either the subregional or regional levels, and the full potential of renewable energies (notably solar energy) has yet to be realized. In Western countries, the issues of most concern are enhancement of energy efficiency and reduction of energy-related harmful environmental effects.

16.18 The objectives of this subprogramme, which is implemented by the Energy Division, are:

(a) To foster greater cooperation among countries at the subregional level in the energy field (e.g. the Mediterranean area, the Black Sea region);

(b) To promote the development of more sustainable energy systems in order to facilitate the societal transition to more sustainable forms of development;

(c) To strengthen the capabilities of the countries in transition to introduce market-oriented energy policies and to implement economic renewal and transformation;

(d) To harmonize, to the degree possible, energy policies, legislation, norms and standards among ECE countries;

(e) To improve energy conservation and efficiency, particularly in countries in transition, where the need is the greatest;

(f) To further energy transport interconnections, both at the subregional and regional levels, particularly in electricity and gas;

(g) To enhance environmental protection, in particular with respect to the use of coal;

(h) To promote the development and use of new and renewable energy sources, notably biomass, solar, wind and geothermal, as well as to disseminate knowledge about market status and prospects of renewable energy technologies;

(i) To increase cooperative research and trade in energy products;

(j) To update and strengthen international classifications, statistics, databases, energy balances, projections and terminology in the field of energy so as to enhance the implementation of the subprogramme on energy;

(k) To contribute to the implementation of the European Energy Charter;

(l) To strengthen specific technical assistance programmes for countries in transition, such as Energy Efficiency 2000, the Gas Centre for the promotion and development of market-based gas industries in economies in transition and the Clean Coal Implementation Programme.

Subprogramme 16.7 Development of international trade

16.19 The objectives of this subprogramme, which is implemented by the Trade Division, are:

(a) To increase Governments' understanding of the main internal and external problems and obstacles impeding the development of foreign trade and foreign direct investments in the ECE region and the implications for these areas of implementing the Uruguay Round decisions by the beginning of the twenty-first century with a view to contributing to the adoption of policies facilitating and promoting intraregional trade and investment cooperation;

(b) To increase the awareness of policy makers in the countries in transition of positive experience gained by developed market economies in different areas (promoting entrepreneurship, cross border trade, transit trade operations, marketing and financing techniques, etc.). The experience of those economies in transition which earlier embarked on the path of market transformation reforms will be assessed, with the goal of disseminating this information among interested member States and formulating recommendations on measures (particularly on cross-sectoral matters) that will facilitate the adaptation of the countries in transition to market economy requirements, within the international economy.

16.20 The activities under the subprogramme will be implemented in close collaboration with the subprogrammes on trade facilitation, economic analysis and industry and technology. Also, close cooperation will be developed with UNCTAD, the International Trade Centre UNCTAD/GATT, ESCAP and other United Nations bodies, as well as with WTO, OSCE, the European Union (EU), OECD, EBRD and regional and subregional groupings and institutions in the transition economies. The secretariat will also develop its contacts with representatives of governmental bodies, research institutions and the private sector in the economies in transition.

Subprogramme 16.8 Industry and technology

16.21 By the end of the period covered by the plan, more ECE member countries are expected to have joined EU and/or WTO. This will entail major adaptation of the industrial structure of the region to meet increased international competition. While such structural changes will have to take place in all countries of the ECE region, they will be most marked in the countries of central and eastern Europe, as well as other countries in transition.

16.22 The steel, chemical and engineering industries are major providers of jobs in the region, but will have to be kept under constant review in order to meet the new objectives of sustainable development. One objective of the subprogramme, which is implemented by the Industry and Technology Division, continues to be the mitigation of the harmful or unnecessarily painful effects of industrial restructuring, particularly in economies in transition, and the creation of conditions to enhance the future industrial development of the region.

16.23 Another objective is to assist member countries in adopting science and technology policies that ensure rapid technological innovation in industry. Such policies will determine not only their international competitiveness but also their ability to cope with increasing ecological and energy constraints. To that end, activities under the subprogramme will focus on the review of major developments and changes and the identification of trends and new forms of international, regional and subregional scientific and technological cooperation.

16.24 A further objective will continue to be to increase the awareness of member countries, in particular those in transition, of developments in the field of coordination and harmonization of standardization policies, conformity assessment and metrology at the international, regional and national levels. Since sound metrological practices are the basis for quality assurance, testing and certification, ECE will develop its training programme aimed at senior metrologists from countries in transition. The subprogramme will also facilitate the sharing of experience of the developed market economy countries that have recently adapted their legislation and administrative practices to conform with the relevant provisions of WTO and EU, with those countries which have not yet done so.

Subprogramme 16.9 Agriculture and timber

16.25 In the past, this subprogramme has been carried out jointly by ECE and FAO. However, a global restructuring of FAO regional activities has resulted in the withdrawal of FAO staff from the agricultural activities and the transfer of certain joint activities to FAO in Rome. However, FAO support of forestry/timber activities and close cooperation in this field have not been changed. The possible distribution of the remaining agricultural activities to other existing subprogrammes within ECE, or the discontinuation of the Commission's involvement in this activity altogether is still under discussion with member States. Timber activities are carried out, as before, under the auspices of the ECE Timber Committee.

16.26 Pending the result of the discussion regarding the future of activities on agriculture, the objectives of this subprogramme, which is implemented by the Trade Division, are:

(a) To promote United Nations/ECE standards on the commercial quality of agricultural produce to facilitate foreign trade and distribution in domestic markets throughout the ECE region, as well as to develop agricultural statistics further;

(b) To contribute to the achievement of sustainable management of the forest and timber sector in the ECE region by the early years of the twenty-first century, maintaining an appropriate balance between the productive, social and environmental functions of the forest. In that context, the subprogramme will help Governments, as requested, in the implementation of the commitments made at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and the Helsinki Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe;

(c) To emphasize an integrated sector-wide approach, covering forestry, markets for forest products and trade in forest products. The close cooperative relationship with FAO in these areas will be maintained and cooperation with other international organizations, including ILO, UNEP, EU, the International Tropical Timber Organization and OECD will be maintained and strengthened.

Subprogramme 16.10 Human settlements

16.27 The situation foreseen for the period covered by the plan calls for urban development policies that focus on economic, social and environmental aspects and will be designed as an integral part of wider regional planning policies. Social aspects of the housing policy in countries in transition will be a priority for a steady reform and restructuring process.

16.28 The objectives of the subprogramme, which is implemented by the Environment and Human Settlements Division, are:

(a) To strengthen international cooperation in the development and implementation of human settlement policies striving towards environmental, economic and social soundness and sustainable development; monitor and analyse results in the implementation process; coordinate those policies with overall national sustainable development objectives; and build institutional capacity and professional know-how;

(b) To promote the development of practical instruments and means for accelerating the modernization of housing maintenance and management, as well as urban renewal, in order to provide better living conditions and, at the same time, strive for rational use of energy and other resources;

(c) To promote cadastre and land registration systems, in particular with reference to countries in transition, and with due regard for basic land management legislation, cadastral measures, land information systems and organization and management of the cadastre;

(d) To identify new and emerging trends in the ecological, economic, social, technical and legislative spheres that influence sustainable human settlements development in the ECE region;

(e) To promote the development of reforms in the housing, building and financial sectors in countries in transition, involving also local authorities and the private sector, in order to obtain affordable housing for all;

(f) To promote sustainable development in the countries of southern Europe, taking into account their specific cultural and social heritage.

16.29 The activities of the subprogramme will take into account the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II).

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Programme 17. Economic and social development in Latin America and the Caribbean

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17.1 The general orientation of this programme is to contribute to the development of Latin America and the Caribbean by collaborating interactively with member Governments in the comprehensive analysis of development processes and in the resulting provision of operational services. The programme, under the responsibility of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), focuses its analytical work on designing public policies and facilitates the implementation of such policies, concentrating operational services in the areas of specialized information, advisory assistance, training and support for regional and international cooperation.

17.2 The mandate for the programme derives from Economic and Social Council resolution 106 (VI) of 25 February and 5 March 1948, by which the Council established the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and entrusted it, inter alia, with initiating and participating in measures for raising the level of economic activity in the region and for maintaining and strengthening the economic relations of the countries of the region both among themselves and with other countries of the world; making or sponsoring such investigations and studies as the Commission deems appropriate; and undertaking or sponsoring the collection, evaluation and dissemination of information on regional development issues, trends and policies. The mandate has been further elaborated in a number of General Assembly, Economic and Social Council and Commission resolutions adopted subsequently.

17.3 By the end of the period covered by the plan, the programme is expected to have accomplished the following:

(a) Strengthened its effectiveness and efficiency in such areas as information-gathering, provision of technical assistance, monitoring of events, action-oriented research and more interaction with government officials;

(b) Analysed development issues from a regional perspective, with a special focus on emerging trends and their impact on Latin American and Caribbean development;

(c) Enhanced its role as a conduit to transmit regional concerns to global forums and bring global concerns to regional forums;

(d) Strengthened technical cooperation among developing countries and provided technical services to the secretariats of regional and subregional integration mechanisms;

(e) Promoted bilateral and multilateral cooperation, in particular in the areas of trade facilitation, transport, common standards, scientific research and technological development, efficient use of energy and environmental protection;

(f) Strengthened the capacity of the countries of the region to develop both public and private institutional capacity to adapt rapidly to change, to identify opportunities and to develop the capacities required in order to exploit the opportunities afforded by globalization and mitigate its potentially negative effects.

Subprogramme 17.1 Linkages with the global economy, competitiveness and production specialization

17.4 If the development of the Latin American and Caribbean economies is to be sustainable, their linkages with the global economy (i.e. their quantitative and qualitative participation in trade flows, foreign direct investment and technology) must be improved. In addition, their capacity to take advantage of the expansionary cycles of international and regional trade and to withstand adverse conditions and financial instability must be increased through the diversification of products and markets, the search for foreign investment and partnerships, the use of domestic stabilization mechanisms and better linkages between exports and other productive activities.

17.5 The objectives of the subprogramme, for which the Division of International Trade, Finance and Transport is responsible, are as follows:

(a) The trends towards the globalization of markets and the regionalization of trade, the pattern of trade flows, financing and foreign direct investment and the worldwide process of technological change is likely to undergo new transformations in areas of importance to the region. Thus, the first objective is to alert the countries of the region to the advantages and disadvantages that the international situation entails for their linkages with the global economy and to enrich the debate over the appropriate design of national policies to promote competitiveness and growth in that context;

(b) Notwithstanding the fact that, during the past two decades, several Latin American and Caribbean countries have managed to improve their linkages with the global economy through changes in the structure and direction of exports, the challenge of consolidating new specialization models, based on a profound change in production patterns and an increase in international competitiveness, continues to be relevant. The second objective is to promote the comparative study of export-driven development with a view to identifying strategic components of a dynamic process of changing production patterns that can support new specialization models and to make policy recommendations in that area;

(c) The foreseeable developments in the international context - economic, political and institutional - following the Uruguay Round and the advance of regional and subregional integration agreements can offer some opportunities for countries whose productive and export-driven development has been retarded; nevertheless, they also entail a significant erosion of the opportunities for implementing selective policies to promote such development. The third objective is to support the ongoing comparative study of trade policies and of the evolution of the regulatory framework for international trade with a view to optimizing the use of available opportunities and strengthening the region's negotiating capacity.

Subprogramme 17.2 Integration, open regionalism and regional cooperation

17.6 Within the southern hemisphere, the large number of commitments entered into by many countries in the region poses the challenge of reconciling economic globalization with regional integration agreements so as to avoid the

fragmentation of the world economy into trading blocs. Another issue that has to be addressed is whether integration agreements should be broadened within Latin America before other hemispheric partners are invited to join them, or whether progress should be made on both fronts simultaneously. There is also a need to anticipate any difficulties that could arise if some of the countries taking part in formal subregional integration processes decided to seek a unilateral link with any hemispheric free trade zone that may be formed, rather than negotiate jointly with the other countries in their subregional group.

17.7 The objectives of the subprogramme, for which the Division of International Trade, Finance and Transport is responsible, are as follows:

(a) The first objective is to increase the understanding of the member States of the region of the conceptual and practical problems that they will face as they move forward in the implementation of the integration agreements already entered into or those which may be concluded in the future. The situations that will probably need to be examined in this context involve the establishment and rechannelling of trade flows as a result of formal agreements to establish free trade zones; the position of countries that are less capable of taking advantage of the potential benefits of Latin American and hemispheric integration; the harmonization of Latin American and hemispheric trade rules with the rules of the World Trade Organization (WTO); the capacity of larger institutions to contribute to increasing investment and productivity in economic sectors; and the link between intraregional trade and environmental and employment conditions;

(b) The regional integration process reveals the simultaneous rise of unidimensional or limited integration agreements, the aim of which is to free markets for goods, services and factors of production (with the exception of the work force), and multidimensional or broad integration agreements, which have already reached the stage of customs unions and which aim at common markets and economic unions and at coordinated, harmonized and even joint policies. The second objective is to improve the existing free trade zones in the region, linking them wherever possible and, to the extent feasible, promoting their transition from limited integration processes to broader ones;

(c) The third objective is to promote the development of an integrated transport system that features complementarity and interaction among the various means of transport, the search for institutional and technological solutions and a better use of pricing mechanisms;

(d) The fourth objective is to promote the incorporation of the social dimension into the integration processes, with particular focus on the coordination of social policies, especially in the areas of employment, social security, education, training and migration.

Subprogramme 17.3 Productive, technological and entrepreneurial development

17.8 The objectives of the subprogramme, for which the Division of Production, Productivity and Management is responsible, are as follows:

(a) The main challenge for the countries of the region is to accelerate their growth rates. This requires the utilization and local adaptation of the best internationally available practices and technologies and the enhancement of the countries' ability to compete internationally through the implementation of policies that support the modernization of enterprises, including micro-enterprises and rural production units, and of the environment in which they operate. To that end, the objective is to enhance the capability of the Governments of the region to formulate and implement policies and actions to strengthen the technological dimension of productive activities, increase competitiveness, eliminate bottlenecks in the key factor markets - mainly in the area of human resources, physical capital and export promotion policies - and stimulate entrepreneurial development;

(b) As the Latin American and Caribbean region is abundantly endowed with natural resources, its path to development must necessarily include industrialization, based on the exploitation of its wealth of natural resources, combined with expansion of the activities and subsectors that tend to coalesce around this production base, such as supply and processing industries and services, or that have lateral linkages based on a related technology or management structure. From this standpoint, production systems built around fishing, forestry, mining, energy supplies and agriculture become areas of special interest. The second objective is thus to increase knowledge of the linkages and production chains that are being developed in the region and to identify the policies best suited to supporting this process. Special attention will be paid to the factors that can maximize the positive effects of such linkages on employment generation, poverty alleviation and income distribution, while minimizing their negative impact on the environment;

(c) Another objective following from the above is to promote, on the one hand, the introduction and dissemination of technologies that facilitate a fuller identification and utilization of natural assets and, on the other hand, the definition and development of the capacities required to manage them, with a view to assigning priority to industries based on the exploitation and processing of natural resources and linking them to the effort to change production patterns;

(d) Transnational corporations are the main factor in the current globalization and restructuring of international markets. They are also decisive agents of the ongoing technological innovation process. Accordingly, the objective is to highlight the potential contribution these transnational agents can make to the economic development of the region's countries and to increase the understanding of the behavioural strategies of such enterprises and of their technology transfer methods and partnership arrangements with local agents, in order to promote the establishment of Latin American and Caribbean transnational enterprises that can contribute to the fulfilment of the region's development objectives;

(e) One area in which serious difficulties are anticipated is urban and intercity transport, since growing demand will exert strong pressure on an infrastructure the physical capacity of which cannot be expanded sufficiently in the short term. Accordingly, the last objective is to support the efforts of countries in the region to increase the overall efficiency of the urban and

intercity transport infrastructure and to improve the management of transport services, mainly by restructuring them, strengthening institutional capacity and redefining the role of the private sector.

Subprogramme 17.4 Macroeconomic equilibria, investment and financing

17.9 The objectives of the subprogramme, for which the Division of Economic Development is responsible, are as follows:

(a) In order to have a full understanding of economic development processes and the resulting types of linkages with an increasingly globalized international economy, it is essential to continue to monitor the macroeconomic context and means of overcoming the periodic constraints that the Latin American and Caribbean economies face. The objective is to increase the knowledge of overall economic trends in the region, the policies adopted and the developments that are taking place in the Latin American and Caribbean economies. Special attention will be paid to two issues: the compatibility between economic policy (fiscal, monetary and exchange rate policies) and the structural reforms that are being implemented in the region; and the new types of external constraints that could result from financial globalization and the development of new debt instruments and facilities;

(b) Another objective is to assess the effectiveness of development strategies implemented in the region in maintaining macroeconomic equilibria and achieving accelerated growth. In addition, medium- and long-term prospective studies will be carried out in order to support and assess the design of policies to promote the region's economic and social development;

(c) The low national saving levels characteristic of the region's economies, and the limited volume of investment resulting from such savings, will only allow them to grow at moderate rates; therefore, unless savings and capital formation increase significantly, an accelerated economic growth rate cannot be achieved. While in some countries the policies aimed at increasing savings and capital formation have yielded positive results, in most of the region the formulation of such policies is still in an initial stage. Meanwhile, the Asian countries' experience shows that there is room for innovation in the area of savings instruments and their institutional development. Thus, the objective is to support the design and implementation of policies to strengthen domestic capacities to generate financial resources for investment, establish appropriate financial institutions and instruments for channelling such resources into capital accumulation and facilitate the acceleration of the accumulation process;

(d) The speed of technological progress in the information field and, in particular, its strong and sustained impact on the trends towards globalization of the world economy, pose another major challenge for the region. The idea of a global information network raises questions related not only to future trends in the information and communications technology industry and market, but also, basically, to the issue of global links in the spheres of trade, cultural expression and political participation, in particular. Issues such as the impact of the Internet on the political decision-making process, promotion of developmental actions and interchange of research results in the region should

be examined. A new articulation between member States and ECLAC could also be achieved through a more intense utilization of information networks. The last objective is to contribute to the analysis and exploration of information resources and ways of optimizing their transfer, dissemination and use in such fields as research, policy formulation and the adoption of decisions concerning economic and social development.

Subprogramme 17.5 Social development and social equity

17.10 The chief characteristic of the present stage of development is the effort to improve the productivity and competitiveness of economies. The commitment to such an improvement, however, will require consideration of the social prerequisites of economic development, which, in turn, will make it necessary to change the way in which social policy is made and the role assigned to the State in this area. Such a change can come about only if the various social agents agree on converting social policy into a state policy that recognizes the economic importance of enhancing the quality of human capital.

17.11 The objectives of the subprogramme, which is implemented by the Division of Social Development, are as follows:

(a) The first objective is to support the Latin American and Caribbean countries in the design and implementation of social policies, programmes and projects to increase social equity, efficiency in the use of available resources and effectiveness in the achievement of objectives, chiefly through the assessment of results, capacity-building and the establishment of new criteria. In the fulfilment of this objective, special importance will be attached to those aspects which specifically affect vulnerable groups within the Latin American and Caribbean societies;

(b) The changes that are taking place in the area of social policy objectives and mechanisms and the progress made in the reform of social services (in such areas as education, health care, social security and infrastructure and urban development) call for a deeper analysis of the new management methods that are being implemented in the region. In this area, special attention must be paid to the challenges inherent in improving the quality of services and strengthening social integration through the organized participation of civil society in the formulation of policies and programmes and in control over their management. Another relevant area consists of the experiments with decentralization and delegation of responsibility for social services and the conditions required to ensure their success. The second objective is to analyse the management experience in the area of social policies, programmes and projects with a view to comparing the various methods adopted, identifying successful tools, examining the main problems noted and formulating relevant recommendations, so as to provide policy makers in the social areas with objective information for the definition of national social policies;

(c) Despite the progress noted in some countries, statistical information and social indicators point to a worsening of income distribution and a higher incidence of poverty in most of the region, conditions that will take a long time to alleviate. In addition, poverty now displays different characteristics, notably its growing diversity and predominance in urban areas, even though rural

poverty continues to be more critical. The third objective is to sharpen and update the diagnosis of social conditions in the countries of the region, especially in so far as the identification and follow-up of poverty situations and the analysis of the linkages among employment, income distribution and education are concerned;

(d) While in recent years the employment, education and health care status of Latin American and Caribbean women has undergone important changes, obstacles remain to their full integration into the development process and to their participation in all stages of the decision-making process. The fourth objective is to promote the establishment of regional institutional mechanisms to guarantee the full collaboration and participation of women in the main spheres of economic, political and social development. Special attention will be given to the implementation of the Regional Programme of Action for the Women of Latin America and the Caribbean, 1995-2001;

(e) There is an urgent need to study and elaborate the economic impact caused by the production and trafficking of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. The fifth objective is to facilitate appropriate follow-up and complementary work to the United Nations International Drug Control Programme studies and research and analysis of the economic and social impact of drug production, trafficking and consumption, as well as formulations of alternative development programmes to remedy this impact, and to provide technical assistance in the formulation of national policies to prevent and reduce the production, trafficking and consumption of illicit drugs and psychotropic substances.

Subprogramme 17.6 Strategic administration and State reform

17.12 The objectives of the subprogramme, for which the Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES), is responsible are as follows:

(a) Strategic administration within a democratic framework is a decisive prerequisite for the type of development to which the Latin American and Caribbean region aspires. The support of various social agents and the establishment of long-term political agreements will be key factors in ensuring acceptance of the responsibilities and sacrifices that reform entails. The first objective is to arrive at clarifying the concept of strategic administration and at systematizing a dynamic approach to the issue, one that highlights the need for Governments and societies to collaborate in establishing a coherent order of priorities and to generate ongoing social support for the changes needed, in order to maintain the stability of the system;

(b) The second objective is to facilitate the development of an analytic framework available to the region's countries that can assist them in determining the public agenda on, among others, public safety, corruption, poverty and drug abuse, consistent with the economic and social policies required for changing production patterns with social equity. An effort will thus be made to arrive at a medium-term strategic vision, having both technological and political dimensions, that promotes the implementation of

policies to achieve democratic consensus, participation and leadership, so as to elicit support for the changes required;

(c) Another basic prerequisite for development will be to continue the current efforts to ensure a substantial restructuring of the State and of public administration in the region. The third objective is to support the countries of the region in their efforts to improve the design of public policies, especially as regards reform of the system for analysing and formalizing such policies and the preparation of legal and administrative initiatives;

(d) The fourth objective is to promote the efficiency and effectiveness of regional public administration within the countries of the region;

(e) One aspect that must be addressed in the context of reform of the State is the improvement of its regulatory function as an entity promoting the efficient operation of market mechanisms. In this connection, the objective is to optimize the State's regulatory functions through the creation of an analytical and policy-oriented framework for promoting competitiveness, with a view to meeting the challenges stemming from privatization processes, the deregulation of economic activities, consumer protection and increased consumer power, and the upgrading of the regulatory frameworks of sectors not naturally thought of as competitive.

Subprogramme 17.7 Environmental and land resource sustainability

17.13 The objectives of the subprogramme, for which the Division of Environment and Natural Resources is responsible, are as follows:

(a) Natural resources and energy will continue to play a strategic role in the new stage of development and industrialization in Latin America and the Caribbean; the region must ensure that the management of natural resources, their progressive incorporation into production and, in particular, the technologies employed are environmentally sustainable. The first objective is to enhance the capabilities of the countries of the region to analyse and formulate policies and implement measures aimed at promoting environmentally sustainable development of natural resources and energy and establish and strengthen institutional mechanisms of environmental protection at the national and regional levels, in particular in high-priority spheres such as environmental impact assessment and land-use planning;

(b) The second objective is to support the initiatives of the countries of the region in the implementation of Agenda 21, including, in particular, in such areas as the preservation of biological diversity and sustainable use of the resources it offers, the management of fragile ecosystems, the protection of the sources, quality and supply of fresh water, and the management and transboundary movements of hazardous wastes;

(c) The Latin American and Caribbean region has become predominantly urban. Proper management of the urban process entails strengthening democratic local government at all levels to mobilize the societal resources required to expand and modernize inadequate urban infrastructures and increase the efficiency and effectiveness of housing management to prevent the current

shortage from becoming even more acute. The objective is to contribute towards a better understanding of the conditions and trends in human settlements in the region and to support countries in establishing balanced and integrated human settlement systems, improving housing, infrastructure and services and instituting proper management of the urban process.

Subprogramme 17.8 Population and development

17.14 The objectives of the subprogramme, for which the Latin American Demographic Centre (CELADE), is responsible are as follows:

(a) The obstacles that hinder efforts to attain social equity bring to light the magnitude of the population groups who are at risk - women, the elderly, children, youth and indigenous peoples - all of whom are highly vulnerable to the risks inherent in poverty and social neglect. In addition, since poor people tend to have higher fertility rates, more unwanted children and an unquestionably lower life expectancy than groups that are not poor, considerable pressure must be brought to bear on available resources in order to overcome deficiencies in social services - health, education, reproductive health and family planning - to break the vicious circle of perpetual poverty. Thus, the objective is to improve the capacity of countries to incorporate population variables into social policies, programmes and projects, especially those targeting priority groups;

(b) Population policies aimed at overcoming the inequities that affect demographic behaviour are important because they allow for greater equality of opportunity and play a decisive role in defining investment needs in the area of human resources. The agreements adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development, held at Cairo in 1994, underscore the importance of population policy as an integrating framework for the programme of action agreed upon at the Conference. The second objective is to support the Governments of the region in their efforts to implement the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Plan of Action on Population and Development;

(c) Some countries have made considerable progress towards strengthening the capabilities of local governments by enhancing their know-how, technical expertise and human resources in the area of population and development. Nevertheless, local governments need to understand better the linkages between population and development at the subnational level, in particular in the case of small areas and specific ecosystems. The third objective is thus to promote the simultaneous use of sectoral and demographic information through modern software technologies such as REDATAM (Retrieval of Data for Small Areas), which was developed by CELADE;

(d) The environmental situation of the region provides irrefutable evidence of the many factors that converge in the ever-changing interrelationship between population, development and the environment. Thus, the rapid demographic growth of some cities and the movements of landless farm workers in hot, rainy ecosystems are extreme examples of the critical links that exist between demographic dynamics and the natural environment. The excessive growth of cities tends to cause the exhaustion of sources of potable water, pollution of the atmosphere, dilapidation of soils and accumulation of waste,

all of which harm the environment. The fourth objective is to assist member States in designing, monitoring and evaluating suitable environmental and spatial projects, programmes and policies;

(e) In view of the increasing globalization of trade and the repercussions of recent economic trends, the ways in which the countries of the region enter the international market have changed significantly. These developments on the international scene have been directly reflected in migrations and population movements across national borders. Consequently, the fifth objective is to help develop a system for analysing the determining factors and the implications of these new migratory patterns, as well as their relationship with the trend towards globalization of the economy, as reflected, in particular, in integration of markets.

Subprogramme 17.9 Statistics and economic projections

17.15 The economic, social and institutional reforms undertaken by Latin American and Caribbean Governments and the new patterns of development that are gradually taking shape have created a greater demand for information and prospective studies from both public and private sectors.

17.16 The objectives of the subprogramme, for which the Division of Statistics and Economic Projections is responsible, are as follows:

(a) The first objective is to strengthen the capacity of Governments of the region to produce the statistics and projections needed to formulate and monitor new policies and institutional reforms in progress;

(b) The second objective is to continue to promote the introduction of technological advances for broad dissemination of data to the public and private sectors and of new international classification methods, in particular the 1993 System of National Accounts;

(c) The Governments of the region are according greater priority to overcoming poverty and formulating social policies to ensure equality of opportunity and to solve the problems currently facing women, children, youth and families. The third objective is to develop and expand the compilation and analysis for policy purposes of social statistics for Latin America and the Caribbean, including data needed to monitor objectives set by world conferences;

(d) Major transformations are taking place in the region, both at the institutional and macroeconomic levels. The countries of the region are receiving projections on the expected trends in the major industrialized countries from diverse sources. However, often the projections do not coincide, and it is therefore difficult for the Governments of the region to assess appropriately the impact of the trends in industrialized countries on their own countries. In order to develop the regional capabilities to foresee effectively upcoming trends and challenges, the fourth objective is to facilitate monitoring and assessing of new development processes and their projections, including summaries of major projected global trends in aspects that are relevant to the region.

Subprogramme 17.10 Subregional activities in Mexico and Central America

17.17 During the 1990s, the countries served by the subregional headquarters in Mexico made considerable progress towards concluding their stabilization and adjustment processes. From the beginning of the decade, almost all the economies of the subregion - with some variations - showed a clear trend towards recovery in the area of production, in a context of greater monetary and financial stability.

17.18 In addition, the countries have made very similar changes - albeit at different rates and to different degrees - in the orientation of their economic policies, particularly as regards the opening up of external markets, with a view to improving the competitiveness and efficiency of the production apparatus. As a result, the process of external negotiations has become increasingly important from the strategic standpoint.

17.19 At the same time, public policies have been geared more towards letting the market play a greater role in resource allocation. Thus, the role of the State is gradually being redefined, as its involvement in the operation of the economy has decreased, and a greater role has been given to other actors, forums and agents, thus expanding the sources of decision-making.

17.20 The objectives of the subprogramme, for which the ECLAC Office in Mexico is responsible, are:

(a) To identify and strengthen those central elements of sustained and sustainable development that can be translated into concrete actions;

(b) To promote social development policies aimed at assisting low-income groups and disadvantaged and indigenous communities, as well as integrating women into the development process;

(c) To promote Central American economic integration, in particular through the coordination of macroeconomic policies, and to facilitate the countries' negotiations and their incorporation into free-trade areas that include industrialized economies and established blocs;

(d) To facilitate the integration of the countries in the area into the international economy and the incorporation of small economies into hemisphere-wide integration efforts (free trade agreement of the Americas);

(e) To promote strategies and policies that will benefit small- and medium-scale industries in their efforts to become competitive on the international market;

(f) To strengthen the capacity of Governments to formulate macroeconomic policy strategies for the agricultural, industrial and services sectors, with a view to fostering the development of national production chains and improving their international competitiveness;

(g) To promote the development of the energy sector in Central America, the interconnection of electrical systems, the search for new sources of energy and the design of hydrocarbon policies for Central America.

Subprogramme 17.11 Subregional activities in the Caribbean

17.21 In the Caribbean, many policies adopted in the first part of the decade to adjust the economies and adapt them to changing global developments have achieved some success and, if consistently continued over the next few years, will produce steady economic growth. However, a number of policies are still incomplete and the social fallout from earlier years of stagnation and subsequent adjustment policies will need continued attention.

17.22 The integration of the Caribbean market has been on the agenda for many years, but progress, especially within the Caribbean Community, has been slow. New impetus is likely to come, however, from measures aimed at widening the market beyond the traditional groupings, through the formation of the Association of Caribbean States and proposals for a free trade area of the Americas by the year 2005. Protectionist sentiments, evident in recent decades, will probably be more difficult to sustain as new institutional arrangements develop their momentum. At the same time, the widening of markets to include large and robust economies will require more vigorous measures by the smaller and weaker economies if they are not to be severely disadvantaged as they face increased competition.

17.23 The objectives of the subprogramme, for which the ECLAC Office in Port-of-Spain is responsible, are as follows:

(a) The issue of competitiveness looms large for many countries in the region, as they race to assimilate the large unemployed labour force and absorb the influx of new entrants into the labour force. The need to increase competitiveness will continue to be heightened by progressive market opening, since the protected markets to which most Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDCC) countries have become accustomed will gradually disappear. Thus, the first objective is to assist the countries of the subregion to formulate supportive micro-economic and management policies that will stimulate investments, improve competitiveness and channel increased savings to productive activities;

(b) Much progress has been made in improving the quality of economic management in the Caribbean, but this progress has been uneven. The objective is to assist those countries in the region which are either experiencing especially severe disequilibria or are likely to experience new shocks from such factors as the reduction of preferences and will continue to require advice and assistance in the formulation of appropriate macroeconomic policies;

(c) Several social issues, such as poverty, early parenthood and high levels of marginalization leading to drug abuse, crime and violence, will continue to warrant attention, and the search for effective policies to break the poverty cycle will need to continue. The third objective is to enhance the study and comprehension, in an integrated manner, of the causes and consequences

of social marginalization, with the goal of formulating policies and/or measures to reduce it;

(d) On the basis of the recent United Nations global conferences (the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the International Conference on Population and Development, the World Summit for Social Development, the Fourth World Conference on Women and the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II)), the fourth objective is to facilitate regional cooperation among Caribbean countries through the promotion and organization of follow-up activities to those conferences;

(e) Environment and sustainable development issues continue to be of importance to the Caribbean subregion. Issues of island developing countries will continue to receive attention, in particular through the implementation of the Programme of Action adopted by the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, held in 1994. The fifth objective is to strengthen member countries' capabilities to incorporate environmental considerations into development planning and assist in policy formulation at the subregional level on matters relating to environment and development;

(f) Owing to the openness of their economies, Caribbean countries are highly sensitive to international economic developments and their consequential implications for economic and social development in the region. In that context, cooperation among CDCC member countries and between the Caribbean and Latin America, in both economic and non-economic areas, becomes essential as a means of contributing to the development of the region's countries. Thus, the sixth objective is to identify ways by which the commitment of Caribbean countries to regionalism can be compatible with the new demands being placed on them to integrate into the wider hemispheric and global economic cooperation imperatives.

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Programme 18. Economic and social development in Western Asia

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18.1 The overall orientation of the programme is to enhance sustainable development in the region, promote regional cooperation and policy coordination and increase awareness of the economic, social, cultural, technological and environmental dimensions of development.

18.2 The mandate of the programme derives from Economic and Social Council resolutions 1818 (LV) of 9 August 1973 and 1985/69 of 26 July 1985, which established and amended the terms of reference of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). The secretariat of the Commission is responsible for the implementation of this programme.

18.3 In implementing the programme, ESCWA will continue to identify and design a multidisciplinary approach to regional cooperation within the context of the priorities and programmes of its member States, taking into consideration the aspirations of civil society institutions.

18.4 It is anticipated that, during the period covered by the plan, ESCWA efforts will culminate in the following achievements:

(a) Establishment of the Commission as the major source of statistics and information in the region through the development of databases, information systems and networks pertinent to the work of ESCWA and end-users;

(b) Greater understanding of sustainable human development through defining priorities, formulating plans and undertaking relevant actions;

(c) Improved management of natural resources and environmental protection, enhanced cooperation among member States in the area of energy and greater utilization of renewable energy resources;

(d) Development of the role of ESCWA as the regional catalyst and forum for development through its assistance to member States in coping with the implications of regional and global changes;

(e) Increased cooperation and coordination among member States in harmonizing relevant norms, standards, regulations and definitions, and in adopting relevant regional conventions;

(f) Consolidation and expansion of existing regional coordination mechanisms among United Nations agencies and with other regional organizations;

(g) Provision of effective assistance to the Palestinian National Authority and to countries with special needs, in particular Yemen, the least developed country in the region.

Subprogramme 18.1 Management of natural resources and environment

18.5 The majority of ESCWA member States will face increasingly complex issues related to the development and management of their natural resources as well as addressing serious environmental problems. These issues have to be tackled in the context of increasing intraregional interdependence. The subprogramme, which is implemented by the Energy, Natural Resources and Environment Division,

is expected to play a catalytic role in regional coordination and cooperation for the management of natural resources, in particular water resources and energy, and the protection of the environment.

18.6 In the area of water, the objectives are:

(a) To promote integrated approaches in order to meet the challenges stemming from a combination of shortage of freshwater resources, deterioration of their quality and a rapid increase in water demand for multi-utilization, viewed in the context of population growth, agricultural land use and socio-economic development;

(b) To contribute to the design and propagation of schemes for more rational utilization and conservation of freshwater resources, taking into consideration the need for increasing public awareness and ensuring community participation in the use of water, implementation of water projects and environmental protection programmes;

(c) To provide effective assistance to member States in the formulation and execution of programmes for capacity-building, as well as diffusion of modern techniques and technologies for the development of both surface and groundwater resources, including non-conventional sources;

(d) To support Governments in their efforts to establish appropriate intraregional and interregional mechanisms for the development and management of shared water basins.

18.7 In the area of energy, the objectives are:

(a) To strengthen the capacity of member States to improve their energy policies and planning methodologies and techniques;

(b) To promote the use of alternative sources of energy;

(c) To contribute to the dissemination of new and renewable energy technologies, mainly as part of integrated rural development in ESCWA countries;

(d) To foster intra- and interregional cooperation in the field of electric energy networks.

18.8 In the area of environment, the objectives are:

(a) To promote environmental awareness and action to address environmental degradation issues in the region;

(b) To strengthen cooperation within the secretariat and with national, regional and international organizations in monitoring, analysing and reporting on emerging environmental issues and conventions, and to follow up on the implementation of Agenda 21, especially those chapters dealing with integration of land and water resource management and conservation;

(c) To promote environmentally sound technologies to achieve sustainable sectoral development with a view to reversing environmental damage and degradation of natural resources, improving the efficiency of resource use, minimizing waste, maximizing recycling and environmental protection, and assessing the environmental impact of transport operations and energy utilization.

Subprogramme 18.2 Improvement of the quality of life

18.9 The rapidly changing global and regional economic conditions pose serious problems in terms of their impact on community cohesion and family structure and values. These have been compounded by the effects of financial constraints to investment in social sectors and the growing problems of urbanization.

18.10 Attempting the resolution of these social problems has to take account of emerging international and regional trends and the globalization of issues pertaining to the improvement of the quality of life.

18.11 Notwithstanding the fact that issues pertaining to the improvement of the quality of life are indivisible and interdependent and will, therefore, be addressed in an interdisciplinary manner in so far as possible, the subprogramme, which is implemented by the Social Development Issues and Policies Division, will seek to achieve objectives related to four specific yet complementary areas pertaining to the improvement of the quality of life: population, human development, advancement of women and human settlements. In that context, the subprogramme will follow up on the implementation and seek to operationalize recommendations relevant to the region emanating from four world conferences, namely, the International Conference on Population and Development, the World Summit for Social Development, the Fourth World Conference on Women and the World Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II).

18.12 In the area of population the objectives are:

(a) To enhance the capabilities of countries of the region and their awareness in the areas of methodologies and techniques of demographic analysis, population policies and migration;

(b) To increase awareness and understanding of the population situation, trends, issues and challenges and their interrelationships with sustainable development;

(c) To increase understanding of the linkages between population factors and poverty, human rights and environment.

18.13 In the area of human development, the objectives are:

(a) To promote integrated approaches to rural development and the alleviation of poverty;

(b) To encourage production and income-generating capabilities, in particular for less advantaged groups;

(c) To support partnership between governmental and non-governmental bodies, including people's participation in national and regional governance to foster sustained human development;

(d) To mobilize and enhance institutions of civil society such as the private sector, non-governmental organizations, community organizations and family structures;

(e) To promote the cultural dimension of development.

18.14 In the area of the advancement of women, the objectives are:

(a) To follow up on the gender-related recommendations that emanated from the four world conferences referred to above;

(b) To provide support to the family as a basic unit of society and underscore family-related roles, values and identity;

(c) To sensitize society to gender-related issues, including partnership and participation, and raise awareness with regard to legislation and institutional support mechanisms;

(d) To assist in building capacities of non-governmental organizations as tools for monitoring and promoting the advancement of women.

18.15 In the area of human settlements, the objectives are:

(a) To monitor and identify problems resulting from rapid urbanization and social change;

(b) To promote understanding and raise awareness of the problems and needs of human settlements, in particular the provision of adequate and affordable housing and related services;

(c) To strengthen the capacity of Governments of the region in formulating appropriate policies and strategies for sustainable human settlement development.

Subprogramme 18.3 Economic development and global changes

18.16 The economic development of ESCWA member countries will be challenged by the rapidly unfolding regional and global economic changes emanating from the globalization of the world economy, new regional developments, including the economic implications of the Middle East peace process and an increasing trend towards market-oriented economies, including economic reform and structural adjustment measures.

18.17 The objectives of the subprogramme, which is implemented by the Economic Development Issues and Policies Division, are:

(a) To expand understanding of economic development with a view to enhancing macroeconomic management, international and intraregional trade, finance and domestic and foreign direct investment;

(b) To increase understanding of the impact of liberalization of economic activity and improve the preparedness of member States for participating in world economic arrangements (e.g. WTO/GATT, European Mediterranean Partnership);

(c) To identify modalities for enhancing regional financing infrastructures, with a view to facilitating intra-regional capital movements;

(d) To strengthen the capacity of member States to implement economic reform policies, financial management, privatization and deregulation measures.

Subprogramme 18.4 Coordination of policies and harmonization of norms and regulations for sectoral development

18.18 Regional economic cooperation, in the context of a prevailing global economic culture and environment, is predicated, in part, on the harmonization, at the regional level, of standards, norms and regulations, taking into consideration the implications of global treaties, conventions and standards. The harmonization of regional standards assumes special significance in the areas of transport, industry and technology.

18.19 The subprogramme, which is implemented by the Sectoral Issues and Policies Division, will focus on four areas: transport, industry, agriculture and technology.

18.20 The objectives in these areas are:

(a) Transport. To promote cooperation among member States based on improved transport operations and infrastructure policies, as well as harmonization of standards and the adoption of legal regimes for removing barriers impeding the streamlining and liberalization of border crossings and transit traffic;

(b) Industry. To improve the competitiveness of existing industries through the development of skills and policies, enhancing coordination and networking among national and regional support institutions and enabling industries to meet the requirements of regional and international standards, norms and regulations;

(c) Agriculture. To identify and promote appropriate agricultural strategies and practices in terms of agricultural management, resource conservation, and institution-building, and to identify areas that require harmonization of agricultural policies, regulations and norms, with a view to developing the agricultural potential of member States;

(d) Technology. To strengthen capabilities of member States in technology policy and effective transfer of technology, to strengthen their technological capacity and to promote research and development activities, their networking and linkages with the production sectors.

Subprogramme 18.5 Development, coordination and harmonization of statistics and information

18.21 Sound economic and social policy formulation and judicial decision-making are based on the availability, reliability and comparability of economic and social statistical data and their linkages. The formulation of appropriate development policies is also rooted in access to regional and international sources of information. Effective linkages of information and networking, in an era of globalization and sharing of information, have become essential components in the formulation of statistical strategies and have far-reaching effects on it.

18.22 The objectives of the subprogramme, which is to be implemented by the Statistics Division, are:

(a) To develop statistical systems of ESCWA member States, with a view of improving the relevance and accuracy of economic and social data;

(b) To expand the coverage of the subprogramme to new statistical areas, especially in the field of social statistics as required for the follow-up action on the implementation of the recommendations emanating from the above-mentioned world conferences;

(c) To promote the use of standardized reporting procedures and comparable statistics through the implementation of international statistical systems and programmes, in particular, the 1993 System of National Accounts, the International Comparison Programme and the 2000 round of population and housing censuses;

(d) To improve the reliability of statistical information and data and accessibility to them for planners and researchers;

(e) To develop statistical and textual databases in various socio-economic fields.